

## News & Events

### **The StarPhoenix: Great Mystery Explored**

This article, which appeared in the Oct. 19 issue of The StarPhoenix, features an upcoming performance by Saskatoon artist Adrian Stimson, who is an alumna and sessional instructor (Art & Art History).

#### **Dance and performance art unite in outer space fantasy**

By Jeanette Stewart, The StarPhoenix, October 19, 2011

Jackie Latendresse hands over a "survival pack" - a small tinfoil package with some mysterious items inside: Diffraction glasses, an LED finger light and an introduction to The Great Mystery.

With the glasses on, reality explodes into fragments. The tiny blue LED finger light fractures into a spinning orb and the overhead lights turn into a kaleidoscope on the ceiling. The silver package is an invitation to explore a world of fantasy, imagination and openness.

"We're going to be taking people on a very participatory holiday through outer space," said Latendresse, founder of the Free Flow Dance Company and director of The Great Mystery project. The event, in collaboration with Saskatoon-based artist Adrian Stimson, takes place Friday and Saturday at The Refinery Theatre.

The Great Mystery is described as a sensory event, part party, part theatre, part performance art and another part immersion into an interactive art installation: The Milky Way meets Burning Man.

"It's like outer space. It's a little bit of chaos, it's a little bit of order and it's a lot of beauty and a lot of mystery," Latendresse said.

The one-and-a-half-to two-hour show will feature live music, a DJ, several dance sequences, three short films and spoken word. The audience will be invited to take part in the performances, creating and existing in a new universe designed by Stimson and inspired by dance, film, performance, traditional storytelling and the Burning Man festival.

"We tie it all together in a nice cohesive format, but we want to, at the same time, leave room for play. I think a lot of adults forget how to do that," Latendresse said.

Her group of dancers have been rehearsing for six months. Latendresse deliberately chose dancers over the age of 30.

"I wanted people who were not as concerned with tricks and feats of astonishment as they were with the quality of movement needed in an audience interactive environment," she said. "This particular group of dancers bring a lot of life and performance experience."

The dancers must work with an unpredictable group of people, who will be standing, sitting and laying on the floor around them as they move through darkness.

"The exploration aspect of it is so beautiful. The acknowledgment of mystery and wonder really drew me in," said Tina Bertoncini, one of the dancers.

In rehearsal at the Free Flow studio, the dancers move through one of the segments. Audience members will lay on the floor as they spin a story of the stars through movement, with LED hoops and lights all over their bodies. On the stereo, Stimson's narration tells a story of the Pleiades constellation through traditional Blackfoot cosmology.

It is an ethereal piece, its choreography slow and purposeful. Watching it is like existing in a space between awake and asleep.

For dancer Michael Bantjes, involvement in the project was a welcome opportunity to work with Stimson, the creator of the Great Mystery universe.

"I don't think a lot of people in Saskatoon are aware that he is one of the best-known and most important performance artists in Canada and also internationally," Bantjes said.

The Great Mystery is produced with support from the Canada Council for the Arts and Saskatchewan Arts Board. It runs Friday and Saturday at the Refinery. Tickets are \$15, available at The Refinery Theatre, by calling 653-5191 or online at [http://ontheboards.ca/product.php?id\\_product=20](http://ontheboards.ca/product.php?id_product=20).

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